

Young father killed in

Afghanistan

First Lieutenant Timothy Steele is Duxbury's first war casualty

By JUSTIN GRAEBER, CLIPPER EDITOR
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The community is in mourning for a fallen soldier.

Word reached Duxbury last Tuesday that First Lieutenant Timothy Steele was killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan.

The news of Steele's death

hit town just as people were preparing for Tropical Storm Irene, but even the fierce winds that felled trees and power lines couldn't dislodge the memorial yellow ribbons strung up around town in Steele's memory.

Lt. Steele, 25, was a resident of Standish Street and is

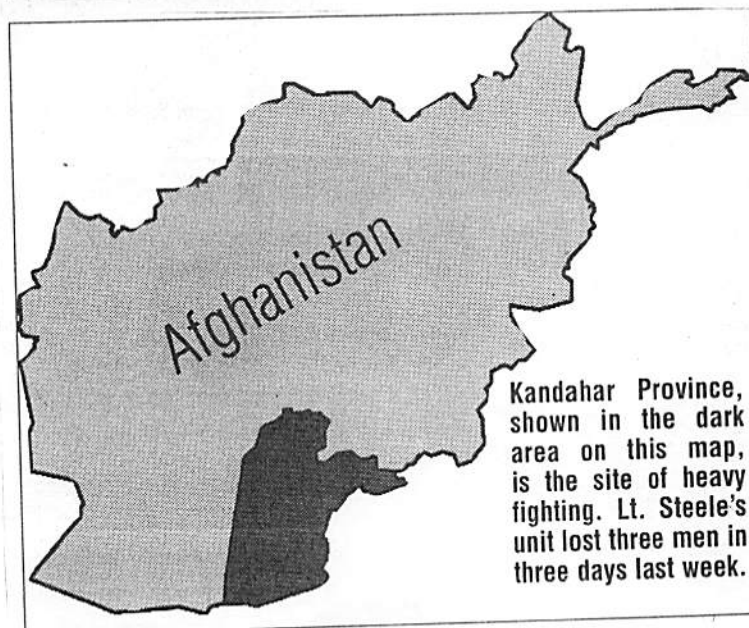
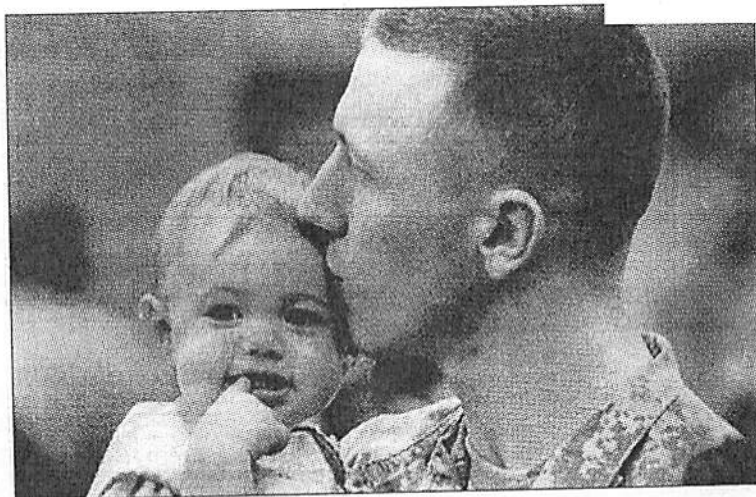
one of 10 children of John and Mary Ellen Steele. He was a 2004 graduate of Duxbury High School and a 2009 graduate of West Point.

"[The Steele family] asks for your continued prayers at this difficult time, especially over the next four of five

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1Lt. Timothy Steele kisses his daughter, Liberty, upon his deployment in March.

Photo courtesy John Berry/The Post-Standard of Syracuse, NY



Kandahar Province, shown in the dark area on this map, is the site of heavy fighting. Lt. Steele's unit lost three men in three days last week.

days," the family wrote in a statement to the Clipper.

Steele was killed Aug. 23 by a roadside bomb while serving in the Kandahar province in southern Afghanistan, according to a news release from the Department of Defense. The cause of death was listed as hostile fire from an improvised explosive device, reportedly a pressure plated mine.

Lt. Steele was serving with the 10th Mountain Division, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Combat Brigade Team, based out of Fort Drum, New York. His unit was hit hard by insurgent forces, and Steele was not the only casualty in recent days. On Aug. 25, a man from Jacksonville, Ill. was killed by small arms fire and the next day, another man from Venus Texas was killed.

At the time of their deployment in March, the soldiers knew they were heading into a dangerous area. They were replacing the 101 Airborne, which took heavy casualties during their deployment.

Friends and neighbors spoke of the entire Steele family as a loving, tight-knit unit deeply grounded in their faith.

"I always looked up to Tim," said Tyson Bottenus, who was a childhood friend of Steele from age seven through high school.

Steele's determination to join the military was set from an early age - he completed basic training as a high school junior.

"That was who he was," Bottenus said.

The two boys were summer neighbors on Standish Street, and he remembers riding around the peninsula on bicycles and building tree forts.

"I felt like a part of my childhood had passed away," he said of hearing of his friend's death. "I was just devastated - I didn't know what to think for a good two days."

The two young men were both on the cross country team while Steele was a captain, and Bottenus remembers his friend's strength and determination making those around him better.

"I would always try to follow his lead," he said. "He had the ability to change people for the better."

"They're a very strong, faithful - they're wonderful people," said family friend Jean Waltz. "They're giving and kind ... They're the type of people who if you were in trouble they would help out."

The Steeles are active at Holy Family Church, often in the music ministry (Mary Ellen Steele is also an organist at a parish in Kingston.)

"They stand out as a family because of their faith," said Mary Keefe who works at Holy Family. "Tim always made them laugh."

Rev. Sean Maher of Holy Family remembered a conversation he had with Lt. Steele after a morning Mass earlier

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SERVICE/MEMORIAL INFO



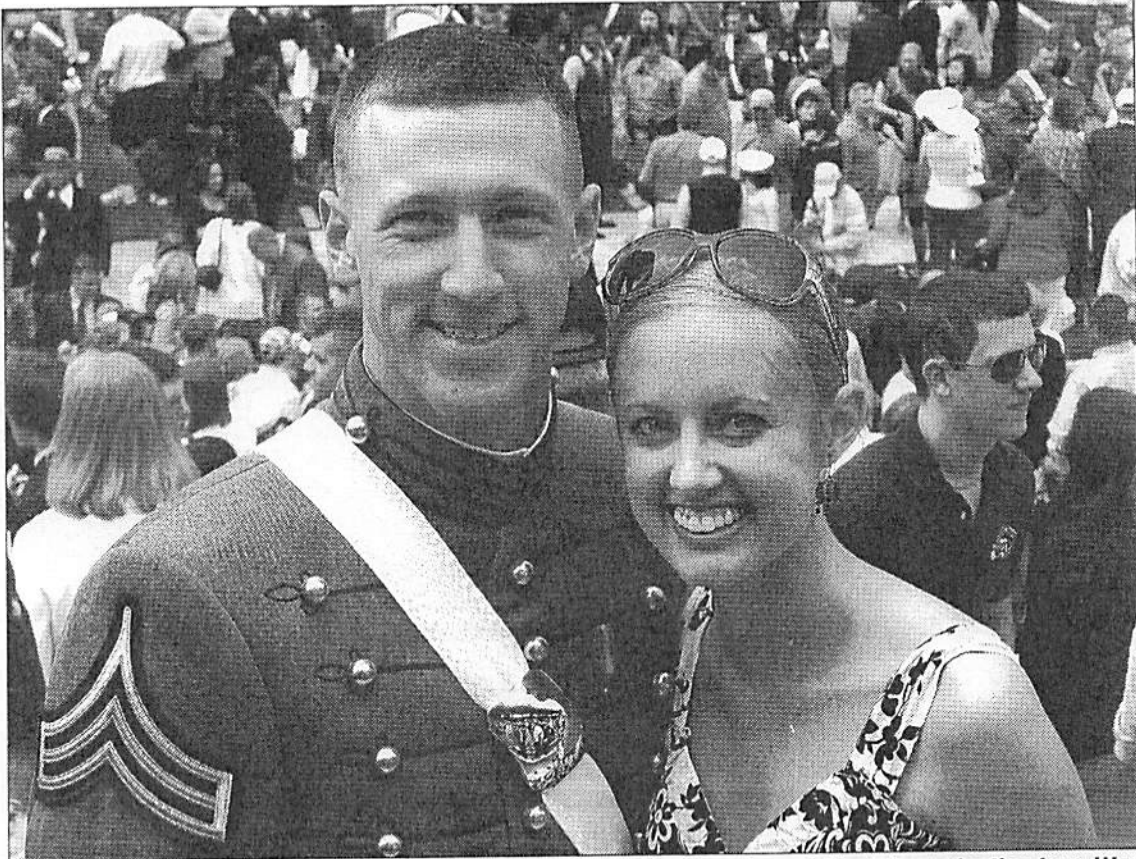
Wednesday, Aug. 31: Fundraiser planning meeting, Holy Family Church, Parish Center, 7 p.m. Email jbish-opdux@gmail.com for more information.

Thursday, Sept. 1: Wake, at William F. Hogan Funeral Home, 135 Main St., Highland Falls, NY, 2-4 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 2: Celebration Funeral Mass, Cadet Catholic Chapel, West Point, NY, 10 a.m.; Final Honors, West Point Cemetery, 11 a.m. (park in K lot.); Reception, West Point Club (Grand Ball Room), 12 noon.

Sunday, Sept. 4: Memorial Mass., Holy Family Church, 3 p.m.; Reception following downstairs.

Fundraising Web site: gofundme.com/Timothy-Steele-Memorial



A PROUD, HAPPIER DAY: First Lieutenant Steele and his wife, Meaghan, at Steele's graduation from West Point. Steele's friends say military service was in his blood.

Duxbury man killed in action

Community mourns soldier

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this year.

"It was a really enjoyable, funny, cheerful conversation," Maher said. "I was looking forward to chatting with him when he came back ... this was devastating news."

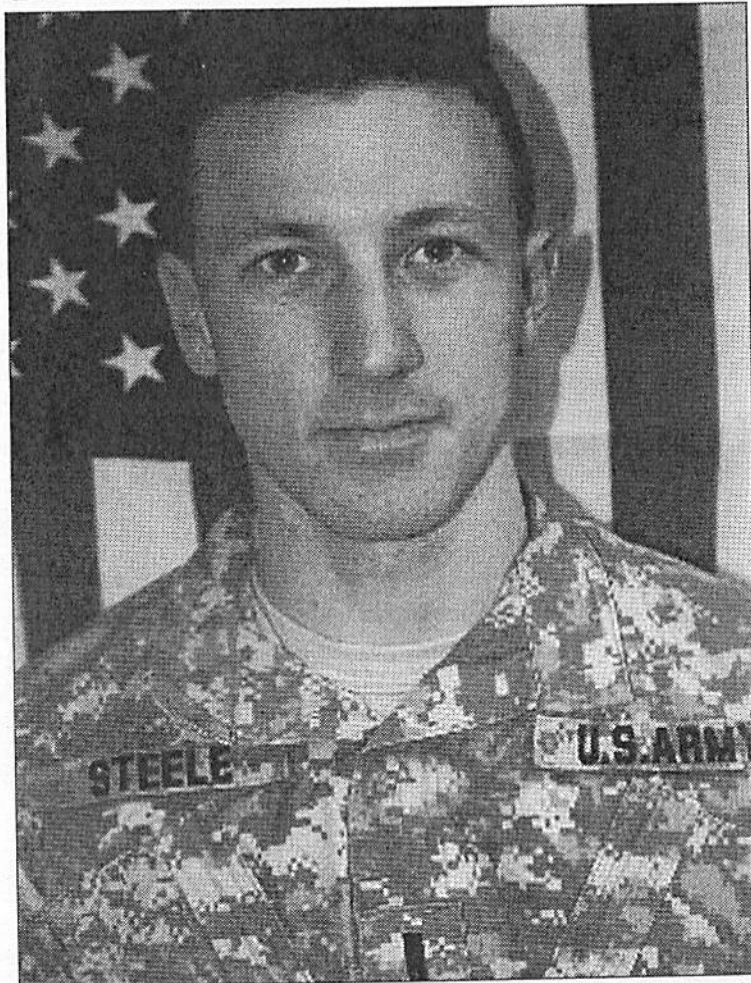
Parishioners from Holy Family are invited to take a bus down to the funeral, which will be at West Point, at a cost of \$30 per person. It will leave at 4 a.m. Friday and will leave West Point around 2 p.m. (See sidebar for full service and memorial information.)

Duxbury High School Athletic Director Thom Holdgate knew Steele from his days as a three-sport student athlete and and captain.

"He was a leader for his team," he said. Especially on the swim team, Steele's leadership skills shone.

"He was able to get the team together and lead them to do their best," Holdgate said.

Even as a high school student, Steele's patriotism was on full display. Holdgate said he used to run cross country track meets with an American flag.



A LIFE IN SERVICE: 1Lt. Steele knew from an early age that he wanted to join the military – he even completed basic training as a high school junior.

"He was very proud of being an American."

The community has stepped up to help the family during the difficult mourning period. After the weekend's storm wreaked havoc on Standish Shore, students from the cross country team and others, including Lauren, Caroline and Will Bittrich, Lucas Wojciechowski, Kate Dennison, Jason Angell and Davis Muller spent most of Monday cleaning storm debris from the family home.

"The Steele family would like to thank the community for their outpouring of support and prayers," the Steele family said in the statement. "They would also like to thank the Duxbury Police Department, Southwest Airlines and the military casualty assistance office for getting them to the Dover Airforce base in a timely manner last Wednesday.

Ling Wong, a veteran himself, set up a Web-based fund to help support Steele's widow, Meaghan, and one-year-old daughter, Liberty. Wong said a close friend was a casualty of war.

"This whole thing with Tim brought back a lot of memories," he said. "We did as much as we could have at the time, but I always wished we'd done more."

He hopes the money raised will be able to in some way lessen the burden on Lt. Steele's family.

"When this kind of thing happens, there's a tremendous emotional burden on the family."

Donors on the site also left well-wishes. Alysha Dohallow was friends with Steele's sister Jessica and also had a brother in a service academy.

"I never met Tim, but if he was anything like his sister he must have been an amazing young man," Dohallow wrote. "His beautiful daughter will always have an angel watching over her."

The Duxbury Interfaith

Council has also decided to dedicate the upcoming 9/11 memorial service to Steele.

"It was a no-brainer," said council President Harry Katz. "We just went ahead and did it."

The sense of duty and family was combined in Lt. Steele. When his unit was deployed in March, a photographer from the Syracuse Post-Standard captured him kissing his daughter Liberty goodbye. He told the paper the reason he was going to Iraq was to make a better future for her.

"I would always try to follow his lead ... He had the ability to change people for the better."

— Tyson Bottenus, childhood friend
